

# Board on Veterans Affairs

## Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2025 at 1:00pm

In-Person at Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs with a Virtual Option

### **Council Members Present:**

Pat Beggs	District 1
Christopher Hanson, <i>Chair</i>	District 3
Yolanda Medina	District 5
John Morgen	District 6
Chris Cornelius, <i>Secretary</i>	District 8
Laura Colbert	Member at Large

### **Absent:**

Robert Hesselbein	District 2
Tonnetta Carter	District 4

### **Vacant:**

District 7

### **Others Present (not inclusive):**

Paul Fisk – American Legion/COVP Chair  
George Stoeber – VFW  
Don Korte – MOAA/COVP

### **WDVA Staff Present:**

Joseph Hoey, Asst. Deputy Secretary  
Dawn LaFond, Executive Assistant  
Jeremy Lyon, DVB Administrator

Chair Chris Hanson called the meeting to Order at 1:06pm. Roll call was taken, six (6) members in attendance; a quorum was present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

Introduction of attendees was given:

- Paul Fisk, COVP Chair
- Jeremy Lyon, WDVA Division Administrator for the Veterans Benefits
- Don Korte, Jr., MOAA/COVP
- George Stoeber, VFW

Minutes from October 23, 2025 were reviewed:

- MOTION: Laura Colbert made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Pat Beggs; minutes were unanimously approved

## WDVA Education | Division of Veterans Benefits Overview

- Jeremy Lyon provided a high-level overview of benefits that the WDVA offers to veterans and their dependents with an in-depth discussion held on the following:
  - Wisconsin GI Bill
    - Veteran/Dependent to complete the WDVA Form 2029 and submit to WDVA to verify eligibility, and provide the DD-214 if not already in our files from other applications
      - There is no timeframe in which to complete, and the request does not expire
    - Once eligibility is verified, WDVA will send WDVA Form 2031 to the certifying official at the University/Tech School Resource Center to start the process, certifying eligibility
  - ACTION: Dawn LaFond to provide the Benefits PowerPoint and VORP/VHRP maps
  - New Claims Phone Number: 833.494.7265

## Executive Staff Assistant Dawn LaFond provided an Administrative Update

- For any travel that is requested by the OOS, including the BOVA meetings, effective January 1, rates for the following have increased:
  - Meals
    - Breakfast \$10 → \$11
    - Lunch \$12 → \$13
    - Dinner \$23 → \$24
  - In-state hotel rates have increased as well and differ upon where your travel brings you to
  - Please work with Dawn LaFond to ensure that the state rate and sales tax exemption are applied properly
  - Refer to the 2026 pocket guide for when meals are reimbursed and guidance on all state reimbursable expenses
    - ACTION: Dawn LaFond to send 2026 pocket guide when available
- There are still a few BOVA members which need to complete their required 2025 Ethics & Public Records training. The final deadline is December 31, so please make sure you complete this training to stay in compliance.
- SEI filings are due annually in April and if you have not received the notification yet, notifications will be coming soon.

## Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey provided updates to the Board covering the following topics:

- Discussed when veterans or their families reach out to the Board and WDVA with respect to Federal VA, there is nothing that the state can do to assist.
- The Legislature will more than likely pass legislation expanding eligibility for the Veterans designation on operators' licenses and identification cards to Guard and Reserve members. WDVA Veteran Benefits staff has been working with County and Tribal Veteran Service Officers Association of Wisconsin on creating and maintaining uniform criteria for documentation required for the designation.
- Discussed that the UW System will no longer reimburse individual campuses for the full cost of providing the tuition remission for their students using the WI GI Bill. UW System has reported larger and larger gulf between what the Legislature provides in funding and the cost -

UW System Veteran, Spouse and Children Remissions & Payments					
Year	Veterans, Spouses & Children	Remissions & Payments	State Reimbursement	Difference/UW Paid Costs	
2017	3651	\$ 23,927,758	\$ 4,717,039	\$ 19,210,719	
2018	3676	\$ 24,511,335	\$ 4,845,136	\$ 19,666,199	
2019	3808	\$ 25,885,222	\$ 4,811,118	\$ 21,074,104	
2020	3878	\$ 26,625,645	\$ 4,961,094	\$ 21,664,551	
2021	3923	\$ 27,771,024	\$ 5,310,899	\$ 22,460,125	
2022	3868	\$ 28,865,218	\$ 5,361,333	\$ 23,503,885	
2023	3890	\$ 29,667,641	\$ 5,405,292	\$ 24,262,349	
2024	4114	\$ 32,651,543	\$ 5,383,785	\$ 27,267,758	
2025	4346	\$ 36,884,321	\$ 5,443,827	\$ 31,440,493	

Not clear what effect, if any, this will have on how individual campuses interact with current and potential veterans and dependents who might be eligible to use the WI GI Bill.

- Although they may be able to shift funding to cover the cost, will it affect efforts to enroll veterans and their dependents?
- Could this potentially affect the economy in Wisconsin if veterans and their families who feel they cannot gain access to the WI GI Bill do not move to Wisconsin?
- The Legislature will wrap up the 2025-2026 session in February or March and it is highly unlikely that the main legislative priorities of the Veteran Service Organizations (expansion of the Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit / additional funding for the UW Missing in Action Program) will become law.

COVP Chair Report was provided by Paul Fisk

- The COVP had a presentation by Travis West of West & Dunn providing insight on uncertified/unaccredited individuals working in organizations who may be taking advantage of veterans in assisting them with filing for disability claims.

BOVA Chair Report was provided by Chair Chris Hanson, District 3

- Update on Future Leaders of the Military where applications used to be around 30, and last time reported it was six (6), but now there are 12 applications.
  - **ACTION:** Help spread the word to anyone or anywhere where youth could potentially have an interest and how they can apply
- Another great free opportunity for youth to apply is the Merchant Marine Academy at <https://www.usmma.edu/admissions>
- Concerns about what is happening in the VA with positions that are no longer being filled. The Tomah VA's appointments are backed-up, but there is no tie to the elimination of positions.

Board Member District Reports provided by:

- Patt Beggs – District 1
- Yolanda Medina – District 5
- John Morgen – District 6
- Chris Cornelius – District 8
- Laura Colbert – Member at Large

Upcoming events, requests to support and other information:

- 01.15.2026-01.18.2026, Oneida Hotel, Green Bay | American Legion Midwinter Conference
- 02.06.2026-02.07.2026, Paper Valley Hilton, Appleton | VFW Midwinter Conference
- Spring 2026, Waupaca | WDVA and Waupaca Historical Society to sign MOU on Commandant's Cottage at King Veterans Home

Public Comments

- None

Future agenda items:

- ACTION: Send any agenda topics to Dawn LaFond

Next Meetings:

- March 26, 2026 – Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Madison
- June, September and December 2026 – TBD

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by John Morgen, second by Chris Cornelius and carried on a voice vote to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hanson, Chair